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Ms. Marlene Dorth
Secretary
Federal Communicaitons Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, SD 20554

RE: EX Parte notice, WC Docket No. 02-60

Dear Ms. Dortch,

On June 20, 2007 a delegation from the Heartland Unified Broadband Network (HUBNet) including Jim Burkett, Director of Technology Services and Jason Wulf, Financial Analyst, and Michael Pryor of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo visited with Jake Jennings, Associate Bureau Chief, Randy Clarke, Acting Legal Counsel to the Bureau Chief, Jeremy Marcus, Chief of Telecommunications Access Policy Division, and Thomas Buckley, Senior Deputy Chief of Telecommunications Access Policy to discuss the HUBNet application under WC Docket 02-60 as well as the attached documents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Wulf", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Wulf
Avera Health

Heartland Unified Broadband Network--HUBNet
Rural Healthcare Pilot Program Application W.C. Docket No. 02-60

Project Partners:

Avera Health, Regional Health, and the Dakota Network of Community Health Centers (DNCHC).

Service Area Description:

- Serves 1.6 million people in 121 counties in South Dakota and portions of North Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wyoming
- 105 counties are designated medically underserved
- 78 facilities are in “isolated” rural areas (RUCA Codes 10 or more)
- 59 counties are “frontier” (less than 7 persons per square mile)
- 24 facilities are on or near 7 different Native American reservations

Description of Network:

- Establish high speed, dedicated, redundant lines between Avera Health and Regional Health and Avera Health and the Dakota Network, interconnecting all three health care providers
- Establish new high-speed links to 9 health care facilities, 4 of which have no broadband connection today.
- Increase bandwidth and establish redundancy to 28 health care facilities
- Add new network equipment, routers and soft switches, to 45 facilities

Impact & Utilization:

The project will impact all 191 partner facilities, either through new or enhanced services.

■ *Development of EMR.* Accelerate Avera’s development of an *Electronic Medical Record (EMR)* integrating clinical and financial applications at 200 Avera sites located in five states. The Avera *EMR* implementation process will serve as a model for both Regional Health and the Dakota Network as those networks move forward with their own *EMR* projects. The network enhancements will facilitate the establishment of an interoperable EMR, with a single Master Patient Index (MPI), among the partners. This is anticipated within the next 5 years and will cover approximately 70% of South Dakotans.

■ *Avera eICU[®] Care Remote ICU Monitoring-* Enable the deployment of Avera eICU[®] Care at six additional facilities and enhance currently deployed Avera eICU[®] Care at 12 health care facilities.

■ *Teleradiology Services-* Enable five hospitals located in rural and frontier areas to implement fully digital teleradiology capabilities, and will significantly reduce transmission times for teleradiology images for nineteen Avera Health and twelve Regional Health sites currently offering this service.

■ *Telemedicine via ITU-T Recommended H.323 digital video-* The project will ensure that Quality of Service is available across the entire network for telemedicine applications utilizing digital video technology. Increased bandwidth will enable facilities to engage in multiple telemedicine or videoconference events at the same time. Each partner will add new videoconferencing sites. With the new connections between the three partners many more rural facilities will have access to clinical specialists.

■ *Regional disaster preparedness and geographically diverse data replication-* The HUBNet Infrastructure includes redundant connections, which provide an alternate means of access to data and information systems in the event of a single connection being severed. A process called “data mirroring” will enable the systematic and continual back up of all Regional Health and Avera Health data stores at both facilities’ data centers. Also, infrastructure will enable the partner networks, representatives of government, law enforcement, and emergency management agencies and other stakeholder organizations to coordinate crisis response efforts by establishing a communication center that remains viable, even when other systems may be compromised.

■ *Inter-regional connectivity for telemedicine and other applications via dedicated links and Internet-2-* The project will include enhancements to support interconnections with neighboring state and regional healthcare networks, as well as design and implement a connection to a national backbone to farther-flung networks as partner needs are identified and capability comes within South Dakota’s reach.

Budget:

The total budget for the first year of the HUBNet project is \$3,328,028 for network infrastructure needs. HUBNet is requesting \$2,828,824 from the FCC, or 85% of the total costs. The HUBNet Partners will pay the remaining \$499,204.

Sustainability:

The partners have committed to sustaining the project. All services that the HUBNet partners provide over the network are necessary for the survival of the health systems. Therefore, the bandwidth and connectivity required by each of these services is necessary and each of the partners will ensure bandwidth availability. HUBNet will increase productivity, reduce costs and increase revenues through additional consultations, which will contribute to project sustainability.

Broad Support:

HUBNet’s application has broad support, including the Governor of South Dakota, the entire South Dakota Congressional delegation, the South Dakota PUC, the South Dakota Department of Health, as well many area health care providers and organizations.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2007

The Honorable Kevin Martin, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

It has come to my attention that a statewide collaboration between Avera Health, Regional Health, and Dakota Network has submitted an application to the Federal Communication Commission under the Rural Health Care Pilot Program. I write in strong support of their application.

For several years, Avera Health has been recognized as a leader in the provision of telehealth services, as well as their ability to provide a range of information technology services through a fairly restricted network infrastructure.

As Congress, various federal agencies and several regional health networks seek to improve health care in rural areas via telemedicine and telehealth services, the need for a larger more functional information technology infrastructure is needed.

This partnership has proposed the creation of the Heartland Unified Broadband Network (HUBNet). HUBNet will serve as a secure, robust broadband network that will allow for increased utilization of telehealth and other advanced telecommunications and electronic health information technologies. This project has established a foundation that will encourage further discussion for improved regional interconnectivity, the possibility of a regionally developed Master Patient Index, and improved disaster preparedness and crisis response. I am also hopeful that this project will lead toward the eventual implementation of an interoperable electronic health record for our entire region.

Your thorough review of this application would be greatly appreciated, and I urge you to give it every consideration. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Benjamin Ready in my office at (605) 334-9596.

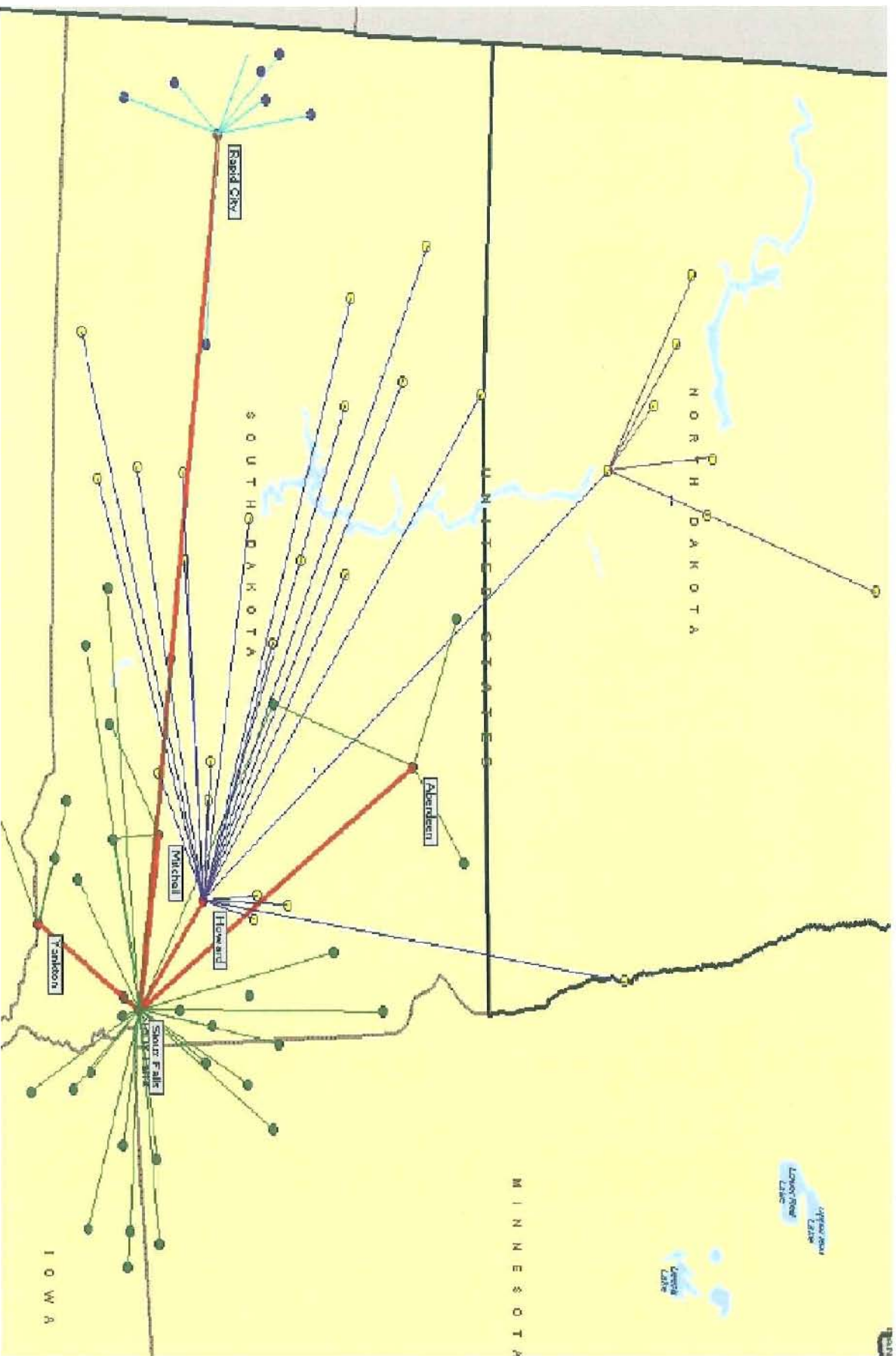
Kindest regards,



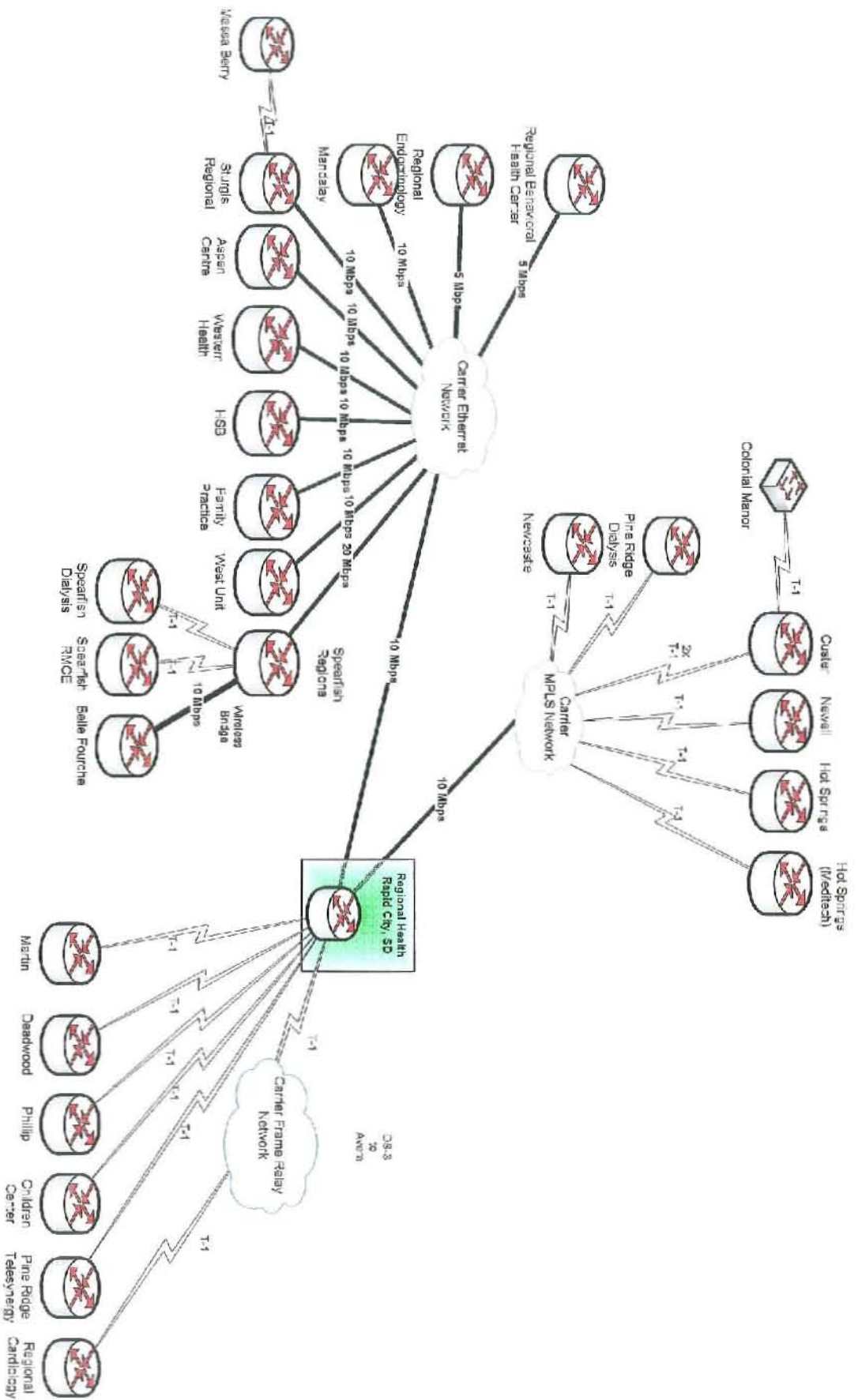
JOHN THUNE
United States Senator

JT:br

cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps
cc: Commissioner Jonathon S. Adelstein
cc: Deborah Taylor Tate
cc: Robert M. McDowell



Heartland Unified Broadband Network

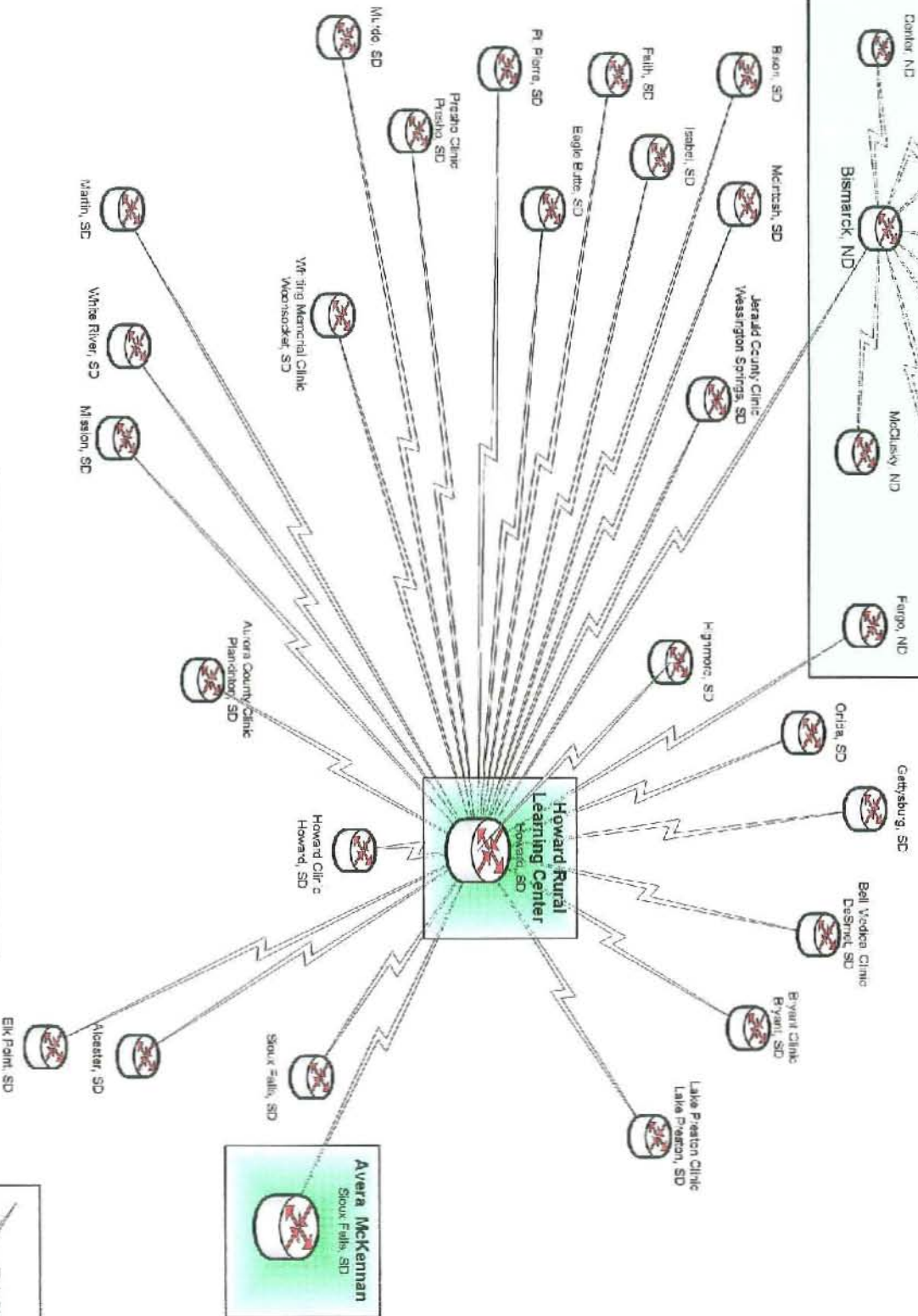
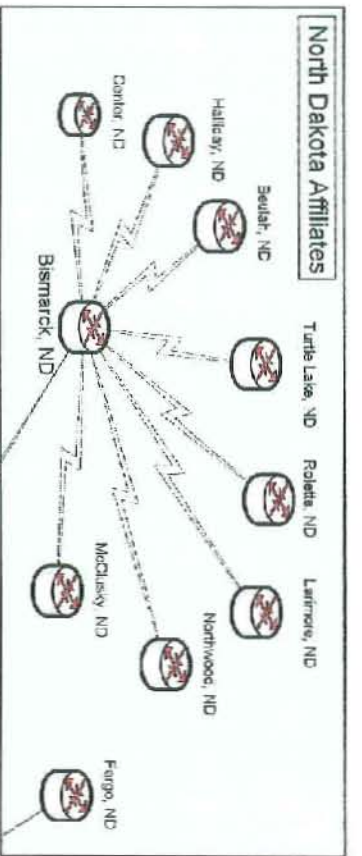


Regional Health Existing Connectivity

Rev 1.1 05/06/07



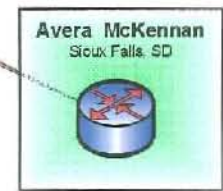
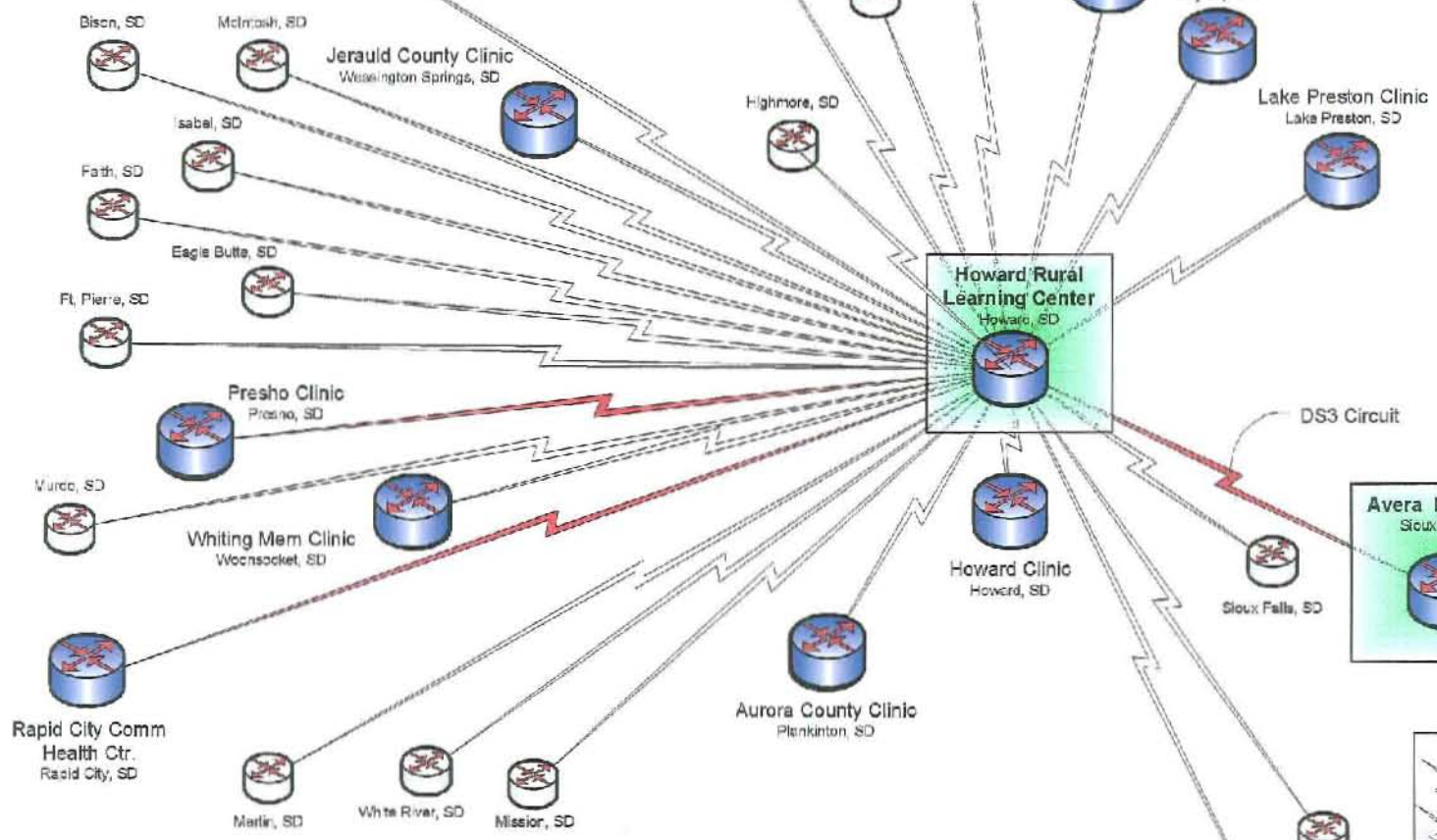
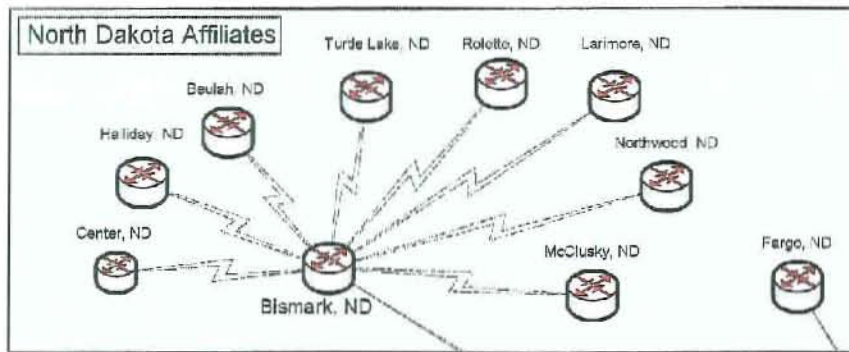
North Dakota Affiliates



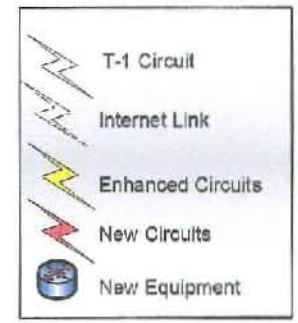
HUBNet DNCHC Sites Existing Connectivity

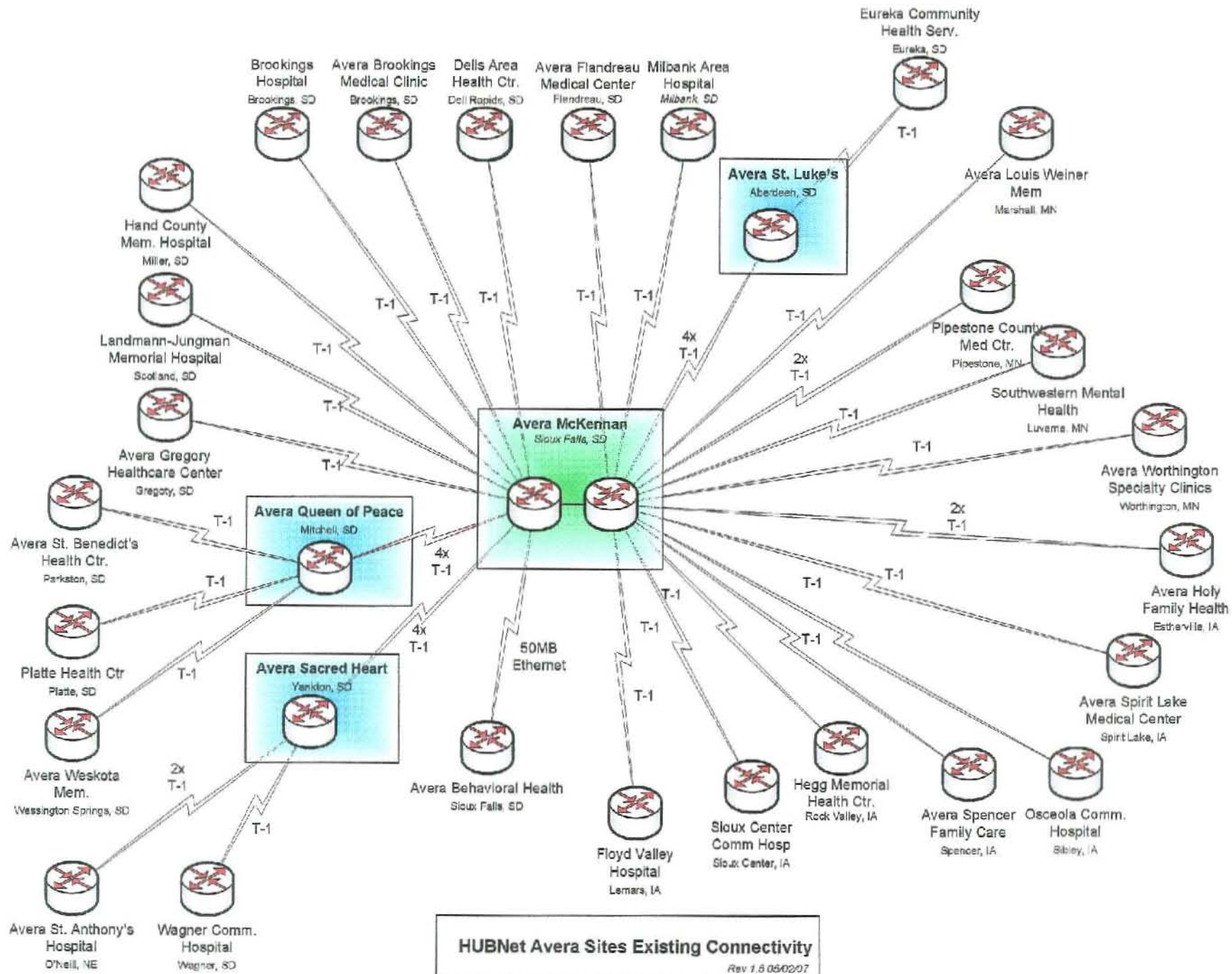
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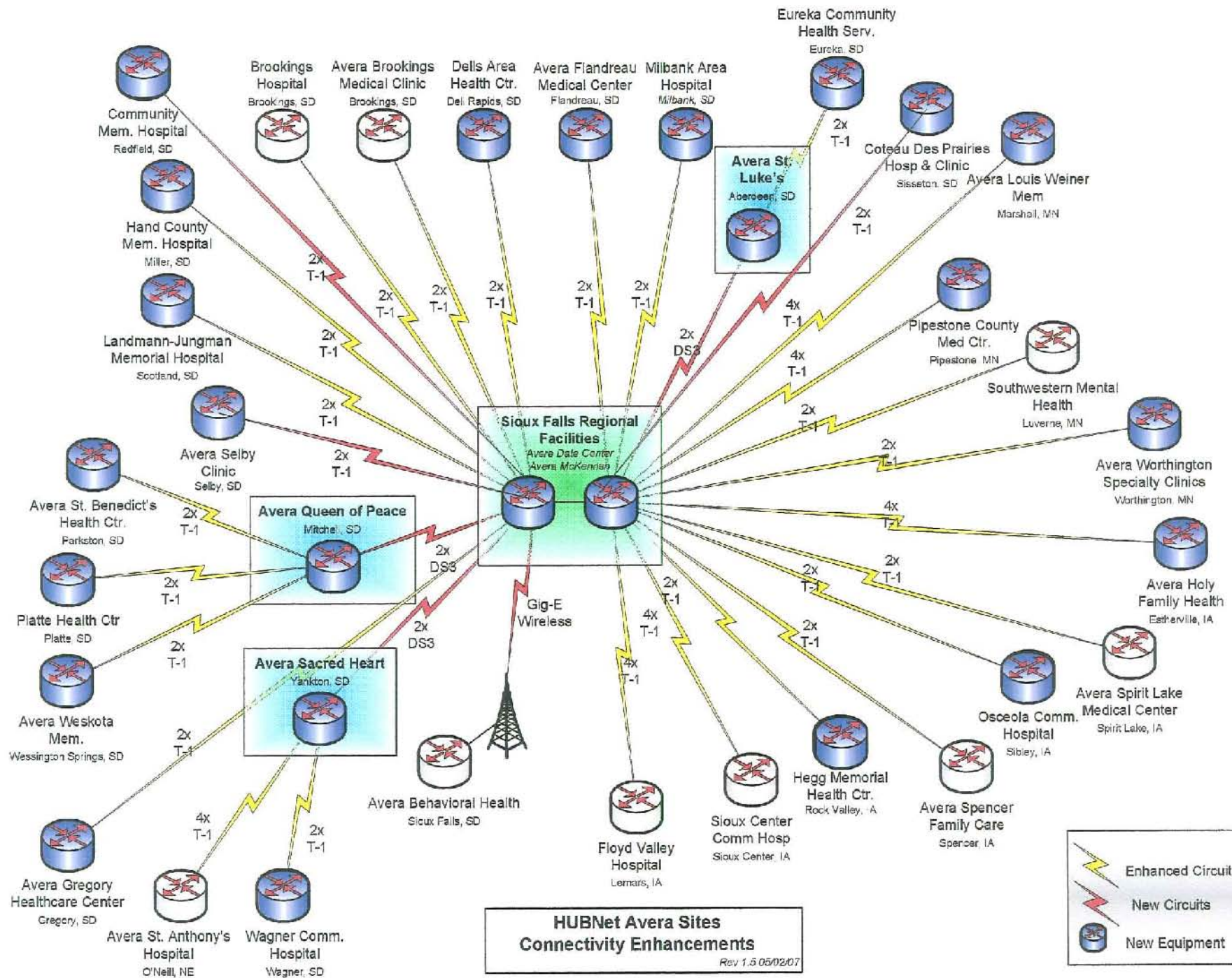


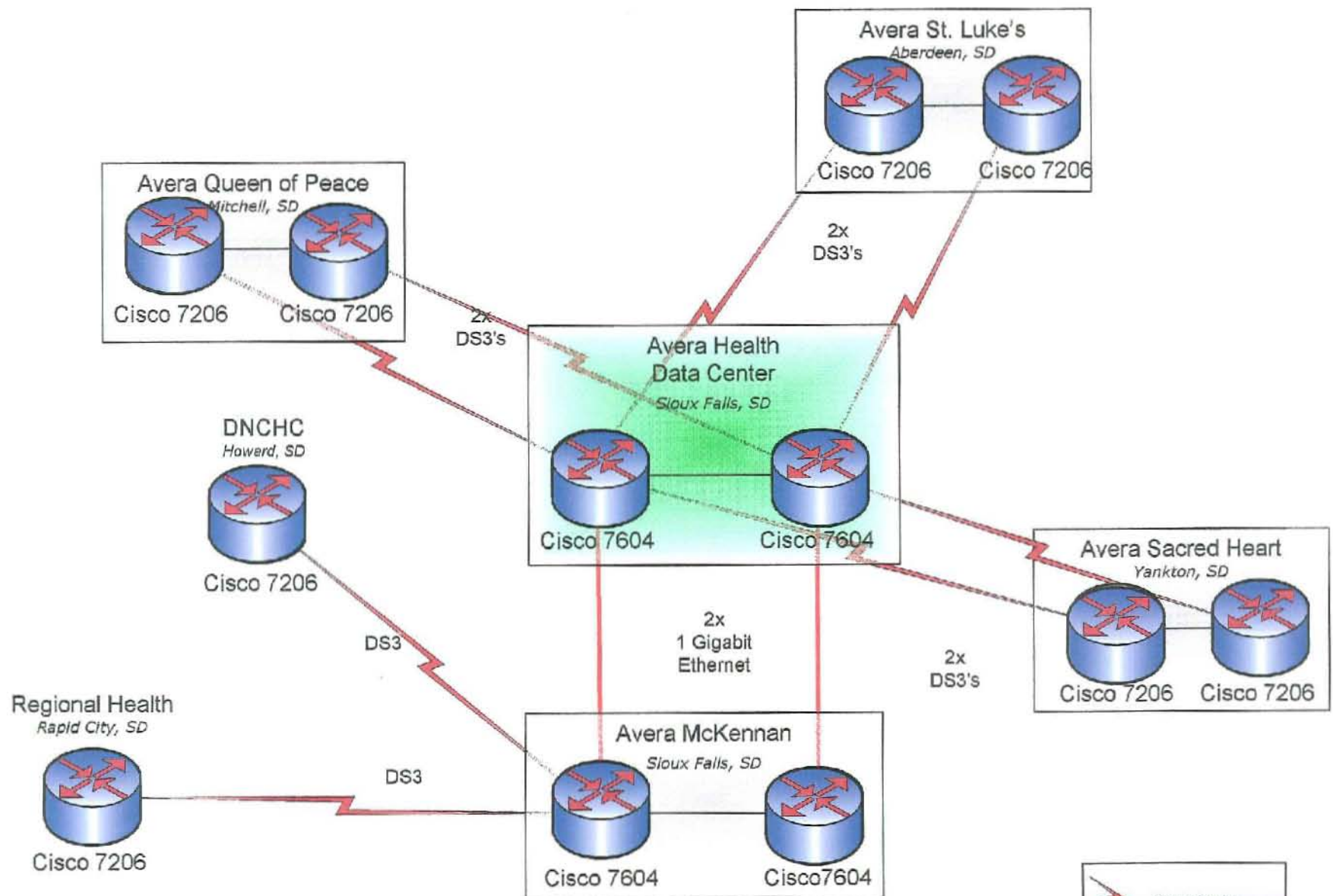


**HUBNet DNCHC Sites
Connectivity Enhancements**
Rev 1.6 05/03/07









**HUBNet Inter-Partner and Avera Regions
Connectivity Enhancements**

Rev 1.5 05/02/07

